

1. Substance abuse has been a major public health concern and still continues to be to this day. Recent trends show that there is hopeful progress on this issue. In the United States drug overdose deaths have decreased in the past year. There is more access to life saving medications such as naloxone, as well as more public awareness about the dangers of substances. There has been with many new synthetic drugs there are becoming cheaper and more potent, which is dangerous. These drugs also are undetectable in standard drug tests, which makes it hard to test for. One of the biggest concerns in today's society is vaping. Many adolescents have started to vape and are unaware of what they are doing to their bodies by inhaling these chemicals. These vapes contain drugs such as THC and nicotine. Social media has been a major factor in promoting drug use and making platforms for illegal drug sales. A positive shift to online platforms is that recovery communities can spread awareness and offer support. As a nursing student and attending the Sandusky artisans meeting, it is important for me to understand the trends and recognize addiction. This will be important in my everyday work life as a nurse.
2. The need for related mental health programs is very important when it comes to substance abuse. Many people who have substance use disorders also have mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, or personality disorders. Many times these problems are undiagnosed or untreated because their symptoms look as if they are from their substance abuse disorder. This can make the recovery for a person even more difficult. If someone doesn't have the proper mental health support they may turn to substances as a way to deal with their pain and stresses. Even if the person's addiction is treated, there is a good chance of relapse because their mental health issue has not been resolved. There are many mental health programs that people can go to for addiction and mental health. These programs hope the people understand the causes of their behaviors and help them find better coping mechanisms. Some examples of these would be therapy, counseling, support groups, and psychiatric care. People are able to figure out the link between their mental health and addiction. A person recognizing the cause of their addiction is a big step in the recovery process. It is important as a nursing student to understand mental health support in addiction recovery. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) explains, "Integrating both

screening and treatment for mental and substance use disorders leads to a better quality of care and health outcomes” (para. 2).

3. People dealing with substance use issues have many similar characteristics, but every person's experience is different. Many people with substance abuse issues have difficulty managing their emotions and coping with stress. People turn to substance use as a way to escape painful, traumatic, or overwhelming life situations. People get used to this as their coping strategy and make it hard for them to want to seek other coping strategies. A lot of people with substance abuse issues suffer from denial or lack of insight into how bad their problem has actually become. These people may downplay their addiction or convince themselves that they have control and can stop whenever they want to. Relationships are often affected by substance abuse issues. The person with the substance abuse issue often isolates themselves from family and friends. Families and friends often lose trust in the person that is suffering from addiction. The addict can also have a decline in responsibilities such as neglecting their personal hygiene or finances. They may also show bad performance at work and school. As a nursing student it is important to be able to identify people that are in need of support. The healthcare team will be able to connect them to the appropriate care.
4. There are many risk factors associated with substance abuse individuals that can increase the likelihood of them developing their addiction. One of the biggest risk factors for this is a family history of substance abuse. If an immediate family member has a history of substance abuse this puts the person at a high risk. If someone grows up in a household where substance abuse is normalized, they are more likely to follow that pattern. There are also mental health disorders like depression or anxiety that are linked to substance abuse. People often use substances to self-medicate themselves or numb their pain. This can lead to dependency over time. There are also environmental factors such as a high stress environment, poverty, violence, and neglect. These factors can all increase the chance of someone experimenting with substances. In adolescence, peer pressure is a major influence in someone developing a substance abuse issue. These kids often feel like they need to fit in with the crowd and cope with their stress. If a kid does not have good parental supervision or poor coping skills this can add to that risk. If a young kid starts to use substances early on it puts them at risk of addiction later in their life. If

the healthcare team can identify these risk factors, it will help them to be able to prevent it from happening.

5. Substance abuse not only effects the person with the issue, but it also affects their entire family. A lot of times there is a bad family dynamic because of someone's substance use issues. A big problem in family dynamics is enabling. This is when the family unintentionally supports the addiction by making excuses or covering up for the person. The family may also financially support them which allows the person to fuel their addiction. The family may see it as love and support, but it can cause the person to not be able to recognize how serious their behavior is. This also prevents them from seeking help they need. Codependency is another prevalent family dynamic when it comes to someone with substance abuse issues. This is when a person does not meet their own needs just to care for the person with addiction. These people can feel responsible for the other persons actions, and this makes an unhealthy balance in the relationship. Families that have substance abuse issues often have problems with communication, trust, and conflict. Children that grow up in this kind of environment may often have to grow up faster because they have to take on more responsibility.
6. Working with individuals and families affected by substance abuse makes me feel concerned and gives me a strong desire to help them. I understand that addiction is very complex and causes many problems. People that suffer from substance abuse often have pain and trauma. These people may also have untreated mental health issues that they are not aware of. I try to work with these families and individuals without judgment because everyone goes through a bad time in their life and deserves to be treated equally. Dealing with people that have a substance abuse issue can be very hard but without help they will never get better. Supporting these people by listening and showing that you care can make a huge difference in their recovery process. It is easy for these people to look down on themselves and feel like no one cares. It is important to support the family just as much as the person with substance use issues. It is important to involve the family in the recovery process because the person suffering from substance abuse cannot do it alone. I can closely relate to families dealing with this issue because I have had to deal with it firsthand. I am able to let people know that they are not alone and there are other people dealing with the same issues.

7. The meeting platform was informal, but it was welcoming. The tables were arranged in a square, so everyone was facing each other which encouraged open discussion between the people attending. The atmosphere felt safe and non-judgmental, which helped everyone feel more comfortable in sharing their stories. We started the meeting by going around the room and reading the principles of the meeting and sharing personal stories of personal problems and recovery. Some people talked about things they are currently struggling with and other people talked about their victories and recovery. Everyone was very open and supportive which allowed people to feel understood and accepted. This is a very important thing when it comes to the recovery process. Hearing about the struggles that people go through made me realize that recovery is not just a straight path. Recovery is a process that requires many different factors to be successful. I would definitely recommend the Sandusky Artisans recovery center to anyone that was interested. It is a supportive environment that makes everyone feel heard and that they belong. The Sandusky Artisans recovery center would be a great tool in working towards their sobriety. I enjoyed my time there More than I thought I would have.

Reference

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2024, November). *Screening and treatment of co-occurring disorders*. <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/serious-mental-illness/co-occurring-disorders>